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1924
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The Moonseed's Ministry

LOUIS D. EICHHORN

The Moonseed's Ministry

and

Other Sonnets and Songs

By

LOUIS D. EICHHORN

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Redlands, California

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PREFATORY NOTE

Concerning certain products of the author's pen, considerate friends have repeatedly urged, "You should publish the best of them."

Here, then, are a few of the lines. Had printing been postponed until some Tomorrow, no doubt much had been changed, from choice of word or phrase, to the mechanical matters of form, punctuation and even spelling. Perhaps the very best way for doing any worth-while thing has not yet been found. One can hardly have done with changing, polishing, improving.

However, one hope is that all readers may find somewhere in these pages, as they are, an occasional pleasing, heartening bit, sufficient to justify production and publication.

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THE MOONSEED'S MINISTRY

MOONSEED! The Menispermum's common name,
Botanic term for plant of wondrous charm,
Uncommon quite thy influence, and thy fame
Shall live while fire can burn or aught alarm.

Long have I lived in shadow and the cold,
Shut in where needful sunlight seldom falls;
Thy pendulous flower-clusters grace with gold
These dull, restraining, damp and shaded walls.

Borne in profusion, Moonseed, thy dear flowers
And peltate leaves, each with a vital voice,
Call to me cheerily through passing hours,
Giving me hope, and bidding me rejoice.

Thou climbing shrub, deciduous though thou art,
Forever shalt thou live within my heart.

"MOONSEED, in botany, a common name for *Menispermum*, a genus of climbing deciduous shrubs, containing one species in North America and another in Asia. The former is a handsome plant, suited to damp and shady walls, with large reniform peltate leaves and yellowish flowers borne in profusion on long pendulous racemes." (Encyclopedia Britannica.)

VISION

TWO men were walking slowly by;
One paused; I saw his eyes shine, heard him cry,
"O see the roses!"

A wagoner then came driving by;
The seat he occupied was very high,—
Saw he the roses?

And other folk go speeding by;
Short, ugly, sharp, their raucus horns reply
To appeals of roses.

Alas, for those who ever speed!
From Nature's lovely page who never read
What she discloses.

WHEN WINTER GOES

IS Winter lingering within?
Now comes the Spring!
Cheer-flinging,
Warmth-bringing,
Melody-making,
Gloom-forsaking,
Choiring, trumpeting Spring!

"Too long imprisoned have you been!"
'Tis the voice of Spring
Me addressing,
Freedom stressing;—
Beauty-showing,
Health-bestowing,
Beckoning, challenging Spring!

Soul of mine, now this song begin:
Again 'tis Spring!
Air-perfuming,
Care-consuming,
Hope-reviving,
Plan-contriving,
Charming, heartening Spring!

WELCOME TO THE CLOUD

UPON the velvet sides of broad, green slopes,
Lie somber shadows, moving as I look.
Dark are the foothills to their very crests.
The lofty peaks beyond them raise their forms
High into sunlight and the upper air.

So, ofttimes, this our daily life appears:
There float between us and the constant sun
Those forms which bathe in shadow well-known ways.
But as we lift our eyes to summits far,
Which yet our weary feet must scale, behold!
Their heads are proudly crowned with Hope's high light,
Urging with insistence answerless,
To tread with purpose high the upward way.

We highly prize the pure, strong-shining sun,
Who yet with powerful beams man overcomes.
So, welcome to the cloud, we cry;—relief-
Affording cloud! While Hope still beckons us
To sun-crowned heights, darkness, we know, is brief.

TO A RUSTY NAIL

THOUGH someone long ago discarded thee,
Thy usefulness, old nail, is not yet done;
Thou must make one more stand in serving me
Before thy final victory may be won.

Weakly to lie, and helpless, on the ground,
Is to acknowledge that thy sun has set;
Some worth-while place for thee may yet be found,
Some worthy service be accomplished yet.

Full half thy head is gone, thy body bent,
Thin, rough and ugly, due to biting rust;
And yet, be sure not all thy strength is spent;
Thou must not yet surrender to the dust.

Come, yield thy body to my hammer's blow;
See how a single stroke thy form improves!
Already Hope and Courage in thee grow,
As handicaps my discipline removes.

Behold! just here thy opportunity,—
To keep this loosened fence-board in its place;
Ready, 't is done; begin thy jubilee!
'Gainst uselessness and death thou hast won thy race.

A WISH

TO-NIGHT some letters late were mailed
When all in the house were sleeping.
While yet they sleep to-morrow morn,
The messages, by others borne,
Will on their way go sweeping.

Would that some helpful words of mine,
Written or sung or spoken,
Might be shared by others for their cheer,
Dispersing doubt, subduing fear,
Thru my last long sleep unbroken.

BEAUTY IS NOT DEAD

NO, Beauty is not dead, nor can she die.
But they are blind,
If everywhere that man may go, her steps
They do not find;
And she herself is there, not far to seek,
Patient and kind.

No, Beauty has not fled; nor e'er shall flee;
She loves us well.
The bell that tolled, you misinterpreted;
Not Beauty's knell
Was rung, but death of heart and brain, alas!
Such darkness fell.

Today I saw her at the market place,
Her face was sad.
"Many who pass me with unseeing eye,
Joy might have had."
Still Beauty holds her place 'gainst Ugliness,
And I am glad.

Dear, deathless Beauty, omnipresent friend,
Lover of all,
Still smite my darkened senses with thy charms,
Nor cease to call
Till, grateful I shall greet thee everywhere,
Thy willing thrall.

A MOVING PICTURE

I SAW an imposing procession pass
Across the Morning Sky:
Giant figures in white
Facing the Rising Sun.
"They look
Like men!"

Slower and ever slower they moved,
And stumbling, lost their stateliness
Until I laughed.

I could have wept
When falling, fading,
Ghost-like they vanished into the Blue.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING

For Mr. and Mrs. A. L. D.
(1873-1923)

IN the Keystone state
Their journey together began:
T'ward the Golden Gate
Set out the woman and man whose life-long plan
Has been to pass thru the Gate of Pearl to the City of Gold.

O precious is Gold!
And precious is all that the years
And Old Time so bold,
Have revealed thru smiles and tears, thru hopes and fears,
To the pair whom Love and God's own grace this day enfold.

And here by the sea,
Whither travellers constantly come,
We make jubilee,
And rejoice with you in this home wherein the sum
Of filial and parental love can not be told.

We congratulate you,
And declare, this happiest day,
That we long for a new,
More felicitous word to say. You on your way
For fifty years have come, and yet you are not old.

As at set of sun,
Oft on highest peaks there rest
Rare tints that have run
Gold-kissed, from the darkening West, so may life's best
Abide upon your heads till you His face behold
Who long has led, and in His book your names has enrolled.

YOU

THRU the night,
Yon Light
Smiles bravely in the dark.

From afar,
Yon Star
Beams steadily on me.

Thru the years,
There cheers
Me, one true Voice, in tune.

You are the Light, the Star, the Voice,
Bidding me see, hope and rejoice.

THE CHIMNEY SWEEP

CLEAN, and with cheerful face,
The jovial Chimney Sweep
Takes his high place
Where smoke and sparks forth leap
When fires with Winter race.

The heights which song-birds grace,
With ease by him were won;
Of fear no trace.
His house-top work well done,
Singing, with sooty face,

He now descending, goes
The chimney's base to scan;
His work well knows
This honest, thorough man;—
My confidence in him grows.

Into my tasks let me
Cheer, skill and thoroughness throw;
These, as a Master-key,
Wherever I may go,
Unlock the Treasury.

POEM, BEAR COMPANY WITH ME

COME, Poem; you bring a meaningful message
From the hot heart of one a-throb with Truth;
Bear company with me, until I rightly
Hear you speak and sing. Your buoyant spirit
Will give uplift and cheer to mine, too oft deprest.

Your form is slight; your words are few; and yet,
To receive your message, my ear and heart are ready.
Again, Poem, and still once more;—your patience,
While to hear you clearly and to understand,
I make a new and vigorous endeavor.

From yon far peak, down to this valley where today I dwell,
You, dear Poem, have brought a burning bit of life
To me. And this from you has nourished well
The life in me, and clarified my vision.
Therefore, my sincere and endless gratitude to you.

PHILOSOPHY

WHY should I hike to the mountains?
There are hills at home to climb.
I simply change my attitude, my dress,
If I require more altitude, or less,
Alter my state of mind, and I'm
At once among sweet Pleasure's fountains.

IN THE ARENA

THE red flag flapping around his horns,
The vicious bull his tormentors warns;
He killed the horse of the first picador
And trampled the man. Then the matador
Was attacked and injured; he barely escaped
With his life. Then the beast a new course shaped:
He cleared the stockade which was six feet high,
And returned to the ranch he had left to die.

No bull has engaged in a fight, it appears,
And escaped with his life in ten long years.

And man, in the great arena of life,
Must meet his foes in a deadly strife;
For man has many tormentors too,
He must charge and fight as a man may do.
And not just once in a long decade
Must a record like this of the brute be made;
But daily must man "break through a troop
And leap over a wall" with a conquering whoop!

Such foes as Fear and Delay and Doubt
Must be constantly met and put to rout.
Man may tap his stores of reserve and power
And gain his freedom every hour.

BY THE RIVER

AS yonder stick upon the stream
Tossed in at time of play,
So I, on the restless tide of time
Am swiftly borne away.

The stick's destination I do not know;
E'en now it is lost and gone;
But I shall anchor my boat at home
When my journeying days are done.

LIMPING

A ZIGZAG streak of white across a gray road,
Silver Billy, my dog,
Erratic,
keen,
missing nothing,
Sets out with me, his master.

I sit by the roadside writing.

He thoroly investigates the Here and There,
Salutes flying birds,
Pursues brilliant butterflies,
Explores honeycombed excavations
For the elusive gopher,
And now
returns
limping,
Even as I did from my multifarious peregrinations.

Birds, Butterflies, Gophers,
Challenge
and
go free.
We — go — limping.

Much territory remains uninvestigated;
Wounds
remain
unhealed.

I sit by the roadside writing.

ENCOURAGEMENT

FRIEND, be of cheer!
Blend smile with tear.

Long tho the day,
Wrong hastes away.

Dark tho the night,
Mark, there is light!

Blest shalt thou be;
Rest is for thee.

NIGHT THOUGHTS

OF course I seek His face when Pain,
Red-eyed and furious, visits me,
And He, my Father, is well-pleased.

But not alone when suffering comes,
And torture robs me of my peace,
To Him I turn; no, God forbid!
But when as now, no grief annoys,
And Night with her benignant touch
Has soothed my spirit, and has tuned
Day's boisterous voices into dreams,—
And all for me, that I may sleep!—
Then eagerly I reassure
My Father, and in gratitude
I speak forthwith my love and praise.
His smile bestowed assures me well
He is more pleased when thus I come,
Than when in special need and pain,
His aid I seek, His presence plead.

God is,—is all I need to know;
Emmanuel,—and there I rest.
Since He is here to watch and keep,
I lay me down in peace to sleep.

A WORDLESS MINISTRY

WITHIN an oak tree's sheltering shade
An old man stood;
Then presently he sat, adream,
In patient mood.

What is it old men meditate
With downcast eyes?
Methinks, tho gazing toward the ground,
Thoughts higher rise.

The old man slowly moved away
With placid mien;
And I am blest in seeing one
Man so serene.

THE EUCALYPTUS TREE

IF I my faults could shed
As yonder tree its bark,
Men might by me be led
Securely thru the dark.
For mark, that trunk so white and clean,
Outstanding may by night be seen,
A sentry patient and serene.

Unaided did the tree
Its simple task perform;
But man must ever be
Assisted, calm or storm.
Dear God, grant vision unto me
To see One Man upon the Tree!
Uplifted, He gives victory.

SCARS AND SONGS

DEAR old tree,
The skillful surgeon did his best for thee,
And yet new scars appear.
I saw thee yellowing in thy sturdy prime,
Ageing and failing in midsummertime,
And it was clear
Thy strength could not withstand the winter storms.
Thy trunk was split,
Infection deep at work;
The surgeon's wit
Allowed him not to shirk:
Cleansing the ugly wounds,
He filled them with a medicine he had made;
Removing needless branches heavy and long,
He tightened then strong cables round thy arms.
In fancy now I hear a grateful song
That through thy foliage sounds;
For by this timely aid,
Is guaranteed thy life and friendly shade.

A SONG FOR THE COMMONPLACE

OF commonplace things I sing today,
Of the obvious, the trite;
For are not ever the common things
The source of our chief delight?

The cooling breeze upon the cheek,
Cold water, the easy chair,
White sand, red bricks, green leaves, blue sky,
The blush on the peach or pear,
The simple acts of a little child,
A neighbor's kindly deed,
Sunset, moonrise, sea, stars and flowers,
Just common things meet my need.

Let him who will seek the wide world thru
For unheard of things and rare;
But I am content with the commonplace things
That are beautiful, true and fair.
There are countless things of the kind I mean,
That are ours without alloy;
And may we have more plain common sense
The commonplace to enjoy.

TO BE A BOY ONCE MORE!

O HOW I long to wander once more in the woods,
As free and happy-hearted as in boyhood days;
To feel again the enchantment of green solitudes,
To walk amid the wonder of old winding ways.

Again to enter those mysterious, dim-lit aisles,
To have the rare companionship of sturdy trees,
To tread the moist and velvet floor, allured by wiles
Of vagrant breezes, charmed by unstudied melodies!

O speak to me again, thou primitive forest vast!
I need a strength and freshness thou canst well restore;
Speak with thy myriad, heartening voices; o'er me cast
The early spell, and let me be a boy once more.

ON-GOERS

MAN so rapidly walking, so strongly,
I myself used to step as vigorously,
As firmly, as rapidly as you.

As you advance so energetically, so confidently,
I wonder if your thoughts keep pace,
I wonder if you are now in step
With high, just, hearty-treading thoughts!

As for me, my feet more faltering,
I fall behind many on-goers like you.
My mind I urge; my thought-march
I try to tune and time with a firm footfall
Now heard and never quite covered
By unceasing and universal noises.

Sidestepping none; backsliding none; still-standing never!
On-going ever, mind march forever,—till the Commander calls:

HALT!

I take no orders, no tempo, from any but from Him.
Often the movements are difficult to execute, but I try,
And He is patient; yes, more patient than you are.

FORWARD!

THE OLD AND NEW

THERE'S a call that is a clamor
For a thing called Something New;
For folk finding satisfaction
In the old, are growing few;
Few and far between you find them,
For along life's crowded way
Men are dreaming, wishing, working
For the New from day to day.

Old songs now, we seldom sing them;
We must have a brand new tune.
Poems too, with rhymes a-jingle,
Like old mammy used to croon,
These by many are forgotten,
Now-a-days much verse is "Free;"
Free indeed of form and rhyming,—
Simple aids to memory.

While the new things claim our interest,
Please our fancy, fickle, vain,—
Painting, poems, music, sculpture,
Yet we often turn again
To the old, the tried, familiar,
These our hearts can always move;
So while the New have our attention,
Yet the Old things have our love.

MY CUE

"THE powerful play goes on."
O the actors! Some good,
Some bad. I too have been
Upon the stage; I know
Just how the actors feel.

Tomorrow I shall play
Again;—another part,
And shall do much better.
Today I merely view
The scene, and meditate.

O you actors! As bad,
As good, as I have been;—
(And some are better far.)
My cue? Yes, Prompter,—quick!
It is—Now the speech is done!
"The powerful play goes on."

UNDER THE TREES

UNDER the trees by a musical stream,
I surrender to Nature and sit and dream.

I think of the sick who must lie in bed,
Of the poor and unfortunate, needing bread;
Of the over-rich, sick of surfeit and care,
Of the thoughtless who never lift song or prayer;
Of the prisoners all in their cells confined,
Of the homeless, the idle, the deaf and blind;
Of multiplied thousands who toil and sweat
To lighten the load they would fain forget;
I think of the souls who never find joy
In the humdrum tasks which their days employ.

So many there be who are sick at heart,
Lacking courage and hope, and who long to start
All over again, to be born anew,—
Such thoughts now and then come to me and you.
Then's the time to go, if you can, and dream
In the open air by a singing stream;
I am sure you shall find, as I found today,
That much that deprest you will slip away.

A VITALIZING VOICE

I HEARD a Voice which spoke to me and said:
"Immortal Spirit, whither dost thou fare?
Thy steps are slow and halting as if thou
Wert not quite sure of trav'ling on the road
That leads thee to thy journey's longed-for end.
Hast lost the vision of the wicket gate
Which once that famous, faithful Pilgrim saw?

Come, friend, thou must press on lest night o'ertake
Thee far from home. Trim thou thy lamp; the light
Is with thee yet; and then, though darkness fall,
Thy path is clear and no delay can come."

Grateful am I, O Voice, for counsel kind;
Thy help I feel; with confidence I go.

THE HOME-GOING OF "UNCLE JOE"

SLOWLY he walked thru the crowded waiting room,—
A quiet little man with beard of gray;
Boarded a train and homeward took his way.

His final passing from official life
Was almost as unheralded as when
He came to Washington, so long ago:
Just one or two remarked, "There's Uncle Joe!"

The train drew out; with scarce a ripple, then,
The terminal's work as usual went along.
So will it be when you and I go home;
Forgetting us, men must their tasks resume.

Peace, restless soul, fret not nor seek for fame;
Strive not for place nor fortune; play the game;
Do but thy best; when comes thy time to go,
Move out serenely as did "Uncle Joe."

IN PROTEST

ONE day "the magic promise of the skies"
Must be fulfilled.
For He
Who made the skies for you
And me,
Hath made the promise too.
Shall He,
Who having willed
That in His skies the stars and suns shall rise,
So faithless prove,
So false to Hope?

Greater His love!
Not all our dreams "must vanish;"
Nor shall "the wise turn to blown dust!"
But we these thoughts must banish,
Else we forever must
In darkness grope.

TRAVELLERS

TWO travellers toward the West, from Eastern homes,
Lately arrived, one rare October day,
In Southern California, whither comes
Many a lover of the charming May.

"And when you crossed the desert," queried one,
"Thru stifling heat and dust, how did you fare?"
"The Lord sent clouds to shield us from the sun,
And gave us tonic freshness in the air."

The traveller's answer, which he promptly gave,
Bring thoughts on meditation's mighty wing,
Which bid another traveller be more brave,
And cause his saddened heart to gaily sing.

Two others journeyed to this land of flowers,
Away from Winter's blighting frost and snow;
And they have known the long and desert hours,
But gracious help from heaven they also know.

One thing may grow where nothing else may be;—
'Tis love, and where it bides is always May;
No bleak Decembers, no infirmity,
No deserts drear shall drive our love away.

TIME'S FAILURE

I SEE Time tracing wrinkles on the fairness of your face,
But he has failed to dim the luster of your lovely eyes;
Nor can he check the vibrant tides that with your spirit's grace,
Like fountains from Elysian fields, from your dear heart arise.
The bubbling, blessed overflow through years has never ceased,
But, like my love for you, your love for others has increased.

TO MY GAS FIRE

THY low, monotonous voice, thy quiet "hush"
Is restful music to my weary ear;
And oft at eve after the day's mad rush,
I listening sit till Fancy's throngs appear.

Here is no snap nor spark, no soot nor smoke,
No ash, no flaring up nor dying down;
Here comes the Muse when I her aid invoke,
With pleased demeanor, no resentful frown.

I turn the key; no fire, no voice remains
Except the creaking of the cooling stove.
Its gentle warmth now slowly, surely wanes;
I hold but what the Muse and Fancy wove.

Life's flame burns low; the Author of the spark
Erelong shall turn the key and say, Enough.
O what shall then remain but cold and dark?
God grant a fabric usable and tough,
Fibrous and warm, of elemental stuff.

A quiet cheer, a warmth, a soothing, steady glow
Let me emit, dear fire, till I as thou, must go.

NEVERTHELESS

SOMEWHERE I too got the stuff of songs, poems, pictures;
Sometimes I too weave fabrics in tones, words, colors.

Today words fail;
(I write new words when I need them.)
My palette is broken;
(I paint without a palette.)

Someone gave me the stuff of pictures, poems, songs.

THE KING OF PEACE

FIND you no peace on earth?
Yet be of right good cheer,
For it must soon appear.

The Restless Christ,
The Disturbing Christ,
The Sword-bringing Christ
Is born!
While Bethlehem's Star we see,—
Sure Guide for you and me,
We ne'er again shall be
Forlorn.

We celebrate His birth
With high and holy mirth;
THE KING OF PEACE IS HERE!

"TONGUES IN TREES"

DAYLONG yon graceful Eucalyptus tree
Continually moved its agile head,
And tip-toed that it might the better scan
The far horizon. Nearby, long there sat
A downcast man with face toward the ground.
I bade him lift his eyes and tell me then
Just what he saw of interest o'er his head.

"I wonder why this regal tree so tall,
Its ever restless top moves to and fro,
While other trees content, all quiet stand?"
Being thus observant, soon this voice we heard:
"I mean to see what lies beyond this town!"

Upon us both the night came slowly down;
The tree, in gentle whispers, murmured on:
"Be patient, brothers, only wait for dawn;
We then shall see what lies beyond the town."

THE ENDLESS QUEST

RESTLESS by day and night,
Mighty with appetite,
Old Ocean's hungry hands
Bring from beyond the sands
Of all they find to shore;—
Then out again, seeking more.

As the persistent tides
Hurry where plunder rides,
So, questing, goes my soul;
You, not the moon, its goal!
For you I seek new store,
Shall seek forevermore.

ONE SAYER'S DESIRE

"ONE must say it," she said
In a poem I read today.
Then twice: "How may one say it?"
* * * "and forever be trying
Till the day we are dying,
To say the thing some other way."

O Poet, Seer, Sayer,
Be not so "stammering and eager,
Anxious, suffering, trying
To say the thing some other way!"

Infinite Creator of pictures,
Revealer of significant Truth,
Only let me See and Understand;
Then let me say my say
In such a way today,
That he who runs may read.

THE CHEERFUL TEAMSTER

HIS wife is ill; he did not sleep last night;
The fretful baby too, required his care;
Domestic duties all by him were done;
And then, soon after rising of the sun,
Whistling he came with team and tools to toil,
To cultivate for me my needy soil.
A truth important as this day is fair,—
The lesson taught, O let me learn aright:

Let me my duties day by day perform
With cheer and uncomplaining loyalty;
That the yield of my heart's soil may ever be
As are the products of my vine and tree,—
Sufficient to nourish well not only me,
But many, whether days bring shine or storm.

ON THE HEIGHTS

SELFISH? Ah, no; I do not mean to be,
Sitting in solitude beneath this tree;
But I have left the busy haunts of men
To hear more clearly Nature's voice again.

My artist friend retires alone to sketch;
To reproduce in color what he sees;
And oh! the wondrous charm that he can fetch
From Nature, as his art and fancy please.

And I have come to meditate and rest;
To open wide my soul; from clod and cloud
To gather mystic meanings all unguessed
While mingling with the heedless, noisy crowd.

God of the open air, give me the wit
To capture here a Something, sight and sound—
Of Nature's touch and taste, and carry it
Down to the folk who need Thy peace profound.

FOR DREAMING

TODAY I pray
For grit to sit
And dream.
Fay Fancy's flit
And gleam
I obey, child's play
Tho it, each bit
May seem.

For they with wit
To dream,
Are gay and fit,—
Supreme
Their sway. So stay,
Submit, nor quit
The theme.

The dream
Becomes tomorrow's Deed,
The deed
That meets man's deepest Need.

"WE NEED TO KEEP OUR POISE"

AN editorial paragraph today,
Proves that the writer walks in Wisdom's way;
This timely, sensible word he has to say:
"We need to keep our poise."

In speaking of an epidemic dread,
There's one thing each of us must do, he said;
Upon hysteria we are overfed,
And if we really wish to forge ahead,
We need to keep our poise.

If unnecessary travel we forego,
Where danger is and is not, learn to know,
We soon can deal this thing a knock out blow,
To all our neighbors and the world can show
That we can keep our poise.

Indeed, my friend, we need to keep our poise;
Need to command a calmness in the noise
Of modern life which oft our peace destroys;
Poise we must gain or lose life's chiefest joys,—
We need to keep our poise.

WHISPERS AND THUNDER

DUTY "whisper low" to me?
No;
In thunder-tone she speaks: "Thou must!
Spite of the handicaps of dust,
Thou yet must show
What man may be."

RELIEF FROM PAIN

DEAR God, I thank Thee for relief
From Pain.
The growing plant whose life is brief,
When rain
Refreshing comes, and from each leaf
The stain
Removes of drought and dust, the grief
And bane
Of its small life, smiles, eager to attain
Maturity. So I find this joy chief, again
To lift my voice,—such prayer cannot be vain,
To thank Thee, Father, as for timely rain.
So, from my heart, I raise this one refrain:
Dear God, I thank Thee for relief from Pain.

DECIDUOUS

THIS is the very leaf, now pale and dead,
That fell upon my face, awaking me.
(My couch beneath an old umbrella tree.)
And meditating, to myself I said:

When I shall fall in season, as this leaf,
I shall be glad if with me, on my bed
There rest tree-shade and foliage, beauty-fed;—
Mute symbols of our common life so brief.

Nor shall I care if all shall fail to rouse
Me from my quiet slumber, where I lie.
We lived our life and served, the leaf and I,
And take our rest content, as Time allows.

FOR ARMISTICE DAY

THIS is the week for us to speak
Of things that make for Peace;
That age-old Strife and Hatred rife
Shall die, and Love increase.

This is the day for us to say
That as for us, we now
Resolve that we, War's cruelty
Shall nevermore allow.

This is the time the monstrous crime
Of wars must be forgot;
When you and I must ceaseless try
To erase the awful blot.

This is the hour when Heaven's own power
Each heart and life must fill;
For this we pray by night and day,
For World-peace and Good Will.

This moment we anew may be
Devoted to this task;
Him we implore shall grant us more
Than we can think and ask.

Plowshares from swords, deeds more than words,—
Let this demand be hurled
Upon the air, till everywhere
Peace reigns throughout the world.

"LET COME WHAT MAY"

NAUGHT as we know it now can long remain.
Wherever Thought's universe-girdling train
Throughout all worlds of things and men may range,
Inevitably comes a constant change.

No so-called "everlasting hills" exist,
However proud they leap toward the sky;
Invisible hands and tiny mills of mist
Unceasing gaily grind their granite grist,—
On dust-wings mightiest mountains earthward fly.

There is no ceaseless sorrow, endless pain;
O'ertaxing troubles, waxing now, must wane;
And what appears but loss shall be great gain.

Unquiet soul of mine, be at peace today;
All things that vex and mar must flee away.
One thing alone remains, below, above,
But one thing only, and its name is Love.
If Love endures and dwells with me today,
I'll do my work, and sing, let come what may.

THREE QUATRAINS

1.

STEADFASTNESS

BEHOLD the rugged form of yon great rock!
Steadfast it stands, established in its place;
Let me likewise be firm, of fear no trace,
Unmoved in every sudden, boisterous shock.

2.

GENTLENESS

LET me be gentle as the quiet night
Whose soothing shadows hush the boisterous day.
So Peace with her allies with me shall stay,
And all my vexing foes be put to flight.

3.

KINDNESS

IF I could be as kind as this great tree
Whose wide-spread arms wave welcomes to its shade,
Strife-heated men, hard-pressed, and wanting aid,
In their extremity would turn to me.

Sonnets

"SHORT IS MY BREATH"

SHORT is my breath, nor long my faltering song;
Brief is my stay, at best, on this fair earth;
Therefore, O earth, let all thy precious worth
Into me flow, and all my being throng—
Flow and compel an overflow so strong
That beauty, grace and strength may spring to birth,
That others also may be blest in dearth,
And right more quickly triumph over wrong.

Too feeble, far, do thy impressions come
To me, O Nature! "Every touch should thrill."
Waken and stir my sleeping senses numb,
Until thy deepest purpose I fulfill.

Thus, whether brief or long my sojourn be,
Mortals may hear through me Heaven's melody.

DISARMAMENT

FOR one good hour at least, I am alone;
And in this quiet park where I may write,
The foe named Interruption, need not fight;
Here, all unarmed, with Peace I am at one.
Yet am I armed: mightier than deadly gun
Or sword, the pen may be, to put to flight
The monsters Ignorance, Fear and Doubt, which blight
And curse mankind, and leave them all undone.

O that my pen compelling power might wield,
That these and other foes might be o'erthrown!
That all the allies of sin, thus forced to yield,
Could be as oft our spirits are, cast down!
These men-destroyers, routed from the field,
Enduring peace and joy should thus be won.

DREAMERS AND DOERS

"BE kind to your dreams," keen counsel of a sage,
Is for us all an apt admonishment;
For following a materialistic bent
Is one of the deadliest curses of the age.
Both young and old there are who oft engage
In ridicule of those who are intent
On seeing visions; those who unsparing, spent
Themselves in the war with darkness which they wage.

To laugh at dreams we once have dreamed, is like
A foolish laughter over broken hopes;
The man who at the heart of dreams will strike,
A murderer is, who in dense darkness gropes.

Dream worthy dreams of things that ought to be;
Persist, and realization you shall see.

FOR THANKSGIVING

BETTER than one Thanksgiving Day each year,
Would be consistent Living thanks each day;
Finer than feasting with our friends so dear,
Is generous sharing with the poor alway.

"And what," said one, "must I be thankful for?"
"For all things, always," so the Book declares;
"And must I then be thankful too, for War?"
Ah, still we stumble on the heavenward stairs!

For life's December, as for merriest May,
For blessings which men say come in disguise,
Father, accept our thanks. We humbly pray
That Thou wilt somehow open our blind eyes.

Help us to tread the path that leads to God,
Grateful and trustful, as our fathers trod.

"WHY SHOULD I WAIT?"

(To C. H. M.)

WHY should I wait until my friend be dead
To speak appreciation of his worth?
Since of encouragement there is such dearth,
More promptly let the loving word be said.
Lover of Beauty, from thy fountain fed,
Many now move more helpfully on earth,
Charm, cheer and self-expression bring to birth,
And grow in grace, by thy bright guidance led.

M——, may thy ministries of pen and brush,
Mingled with Music's ever changeful voice,
Rebuke all ugliness with magic Hush!
And build yet more the Beauty of thy choice.

Live on, brave Dreamer, doer of deeds unique!
Thy praise I shall no longer wait to speak.

"UNTIL HIGH NOON"

ONE said, "Until high noon there was no sun."
Not so; you were deceived by Fog and Clouds.
So, sometimes, in the world of men, the one
Is lost to sight because of surging crowds.
The faithful sun was there; Person is here;
Not permanently lost, tho now obscured;
Unvarying influence still exerted, clear,
Helpful shining o'er the world may be assured.

Hail, Mighty Sun! Age-old thy splendid power;
The shifting clouds are gone that hid thy face;
Their forms and influences last but an hour,
While thou and man, God-made, yet hold their place.

You, Man, are one, and I; steadfast must we
Our course pursue, whatever clouds there be.

NEW-SET SAILS AND CHANGE OF TACK

DAILY I read of those who have come back
To a successful life, when all seemed lost;
Of those who long, by Time's rude tempests tossed,
Headlong were hasting on the downward track.
Women and men who once had lost the knack
Of joyful, helpful living, yet have crossed
From drifting purposeless, to currents most
Propitious, by new-set sails and change of tack.

Many who read these lines promptly declare
How they prevail 'gainst foes within, without:
"You cannot fail! Be bold to dream and dare!
Say, 'I shall win!' then never fear nor doubt."

Be of good cheer! The sun in heaven is high;
All men were made to live and not to die.

THERE IS NO DEATH

OUR dear ones are not dead; there is no death;
Death means extinction; life cannot be quenched.
The Ever-living One inbreathed His breath,
So man in life eternal is entrenched.

When best-beloved ones close their tired eyes
Upon the lovely scenes of this fair earth,
On quest they go for Heaven's highest prize,
For larger spheres and joys of greatest worth.

Our precious "loved and lost awhile," dear friend,
Are living in the shining Morning Land;
And thither do our weary footsteps tend,—
We soon beside our dear ones there shall stand.

So we must never grieve, nor doubt and grope,
But ever Him believe who is our Hope.

"HEAL US, GOOD MOTHER, WITH THY BLESSED BALM"

OUR kind old Mother's pouring wine to-day!
Come, let us from her generous chalice quaff;
Come, let us cease from labor, turn to play,
Let us be children once again, and laugh.

Laugh and enjoy the June-time Nature pours
Into the mid-November of our days;
Drink of the sparkling stream which to us restores
A childlike spirit that rebukes our ways.

Feverish and fretful we too oft have been;
Heal us, good Mother, with thy blessed balm;
So shall we know thy peace, without, within,
So shall we have and feel abiding calm.

Thus, with a wholesome joy, perpetual cheer
Shall our companion be throughout the year.

IN MERRY MOOD

THE pages of one recent magazine
Might lead a casual reader to conclude
That Love and Women, themes forever green,
Were all I relished in my printed food.
Nine poems in one issue here appear,
And all save one, on Women are, and Love;
Showing, methinks,—is not the matter clear,
The editor seeks stony hearts to move?

But I must read of Bandits, Booze, and Men;
Real men who will to sin no quarter grant,
But fight iniquity with tongue and pen,—

Today let's go and see the Elephant!
The circus comes to town and lures today;
We men shall all be boys again, and play.

"JUST FOR FUN"

"WE have to have a little fun,"
To a neighbor once I said;
"If we didn't have, we'd die," said he;
So I broadcast his reply to me
And say to all who are not yet dead,
Hurry up and have some fun!

Lighter Lines

THREE LIMERICS

AT THE ZOO

WHILE strolling one day thru the Zoo,
I stared at an Indian Zebu;
I was startled, my dear,
When he wiggled one ear
And said, "Well, sir, and how do YOU do!"

SPEED

WHEN at midnight his house was on fire,
Uncle Bob showed some class in attire:
He ran shouting, "I'm dressed!"
(He had put on his vest!)
It is true, tho he says I'm a liar.

EXCESS BAGGAGE

A PELICAN once filled his pouch
Too full of fresh fish; he said, "Ouch!"
Tho I'm built in this way,
Excess baggage, I'll say,
Is a good way to give one a grouch."

HOT WEATHER HINTS

SOME good folks, on these wondrous days,
Think everything is in a blaze!
They trek around as in a haze
And murmur, ain't it hot!
While I, attired in bones and skin,
Rejoice that I am cool and thin,
And say to all who sweat like sin:
"This suits me to a dot."

No, friend, I have not gone away,
But on the job preferred to stay;
I've kept right on a-making hay,—
My deathless pomes indite.
My neighbor goes for his week-end
Where billows boom or tall pines bend,
And seeks his savings all to spend,
He says it is a fright!

I smile and whisper, stay at home!
Let but your thought and fancy roam,
And you'll not need to fume and foam
And give your beard a yank;
You'll find yourself ahead o' the game,
Not caring much for praise or blame,
You'll still have week-ends just the same,
And money in the bank.

THE POETS AND WE

IT'S very well to speak about
"The cool hands of the breeze,"
But what I want to hear you say,
Friend Poet, if you please,
Is how to cure hay fever
And my old asthmatic wheeze.

"The honeysuckle's tipping o'er
Its vase of sweet perfume";
I need a tip on how to build
Another concrete flume,
And how to get the needed cash
To furnish another room.

And while you softly chant about
The "violet's dewy mouth,"
I have to figure what to drink
In this my time of drouth;
Shall I stay here or go back East,
Or to the sunny South?

And still the poets poetize
And dream both night and day,
While all the rest of us think we
Are the ones who make the hay.
Who raises the most important crop,
And the largest, who can say?

ANTS!

I SEEK an ANTlered ANTidote
That holds a genuine ANTi twist;
My heart's as hard as adamANT
I am a fierce ANTagonist.

This pest is worse than spooky h'ANTS
This elephANTine mis-er-ee;
For one of those homely Aard-vark things
I'd cross the old ANTarctic sea.

ANTeaters plus is what I wANT:
The things I say get Aunty's goat!
And the ANTS I'll get tho I have to sail
To ANTietam in an ANTique boat.

I chANT more trenchANT things severe,
ANTipathy more than ANTonio had;
I'm scANT of simple tunes like "scat!"
More ANTics cut than ANT'ony Mad.

I ANTy up, rANT, ANTicipate,
The while my spirit sighs and pANTS:
In the ANTipodes, ANTwerp or ANTioch,
O grANT, transplANT these plaguey ANTS!

RELAXATION

I FEEL at home with the kind of a man
  Who will put his feet up high
When he sits around in his old shirt sleeves
  Without a collar and tie;
With a man who is not ashamed to laugh,
  Who will heartily roar aloud;
Who will sometimes do what he wants to do,
  With courage to quit the crowd.

At times, I say, let him do these things,
  But not every time we meet;
Some men there are, such boisterous boys,
  Who at home, or at church, on the street,
Are always keyed to the highest pitch
  Whatever they do or say;
Then I long to do as the Arabs do,—
  Fold my tent, and steal away.

ANOTHER QUESTIONNAIRE

IF you were caught in a Farthingale,
What good would a Fylfot do?
Or a Zikkurat, seeing it has no tail?
Could an Assagai then aid you?

Would you go to the desert for Ampersand?
And where for a Flocculus, pray?
Would a Fyke and an Ankus in each hand
Scare the Wurbagool far away?

And where, pray tell, could an Abacist go
For an Abacus nice and new?
How on earth should an Abecedarian know
If a Doodle bug bites in the dew?

WHEAT INSTEAD OF CHAFF

IS it not a thing mysterious
You and I should be so serious,
Since it is so deleterious
To forget to smile and laugh?
Come, just for today let's try it,
Unfurl Laughter's flag, and fly it;
Gloom! I shall not once go nigh it,—
Wheat for me instead of chaff!

When you feel deprest and weary,
Lonely and a trifle teary,
Don a sunny smile and cheery,
Very soon you'll want to laugh;
When you feel like laughing, do it,
You will never, never rue it,
For the harvest,—and you grew it,
Will be wheat instead of chaff.

A SLOGAN FOR JULY

NOW that July has rolled around again,
I say to girls and women, boys and men,
Slow-up-a-bit.

Since you desire to have good summer health,
To lay up in reserve some worth while wealth,
Slow-up-a-bit.

If you would travel safely, sure and far,
On foot or horseback, airplane, submarine or car,
Begin today, no matter who you are,—
Slow-up-a-bit.

The only proper place for year-round speed
Is in our THINKING! There's our greatest need.
Put pace and pep into THINKING! Yet, I plead,
Slow-up-a-bit.

'T will make a hit like Christmas and December,
My slogan new, if all should but remember
There's plenty of time to speed up with September!
So, that you may drive like Jehu by November,
Slow-up-a-bit.

FALSE MOTION AND COMMOTION

HE could not get "the hang of it,"
And so WE got the bang of it,
The fang of it, the clash of it,
The pang of it, the crash of it,
The clatter, jangle, whang of it,
The noisy, needless twang of it.

Some are always dropping things,
Never fastening flopping things,
Rustling, rattling their newspapers,
Always cutting curious capers,
Seeming to prefer the clamor,
And the raucus, violent slammer.

Since there is so much necessary noise,
We must do all we can to keep our poise,
To keep our voices low, our motions quiet.
Tho we may fail in this, yet must we try it,
And thus protect our own and others' nerves;
He who does this, society also serves.

ON WASHING DISHES

TODAY I joined the Home Construction Gang,
And cleared the table, put away the food,
And feeling in a fine and generous mood,
I volunteered and washed the dishes! Bang!

Bravely I started; cheerful songs I sang,
My task I optimistically viewed;
Constructive work, indeed; there shall intrude
No thoughts of drudgery,—humdrum go hang!

To polish glass and silver till they shine,
Is joy. The water hot, the dish cloths clean,
The china white and gold and blue and green,—
How came that popular tune, "Dishwasher's Whine"?

But when the greasy kettles, pots and pans
Appear upon the scene for cleansing too,
Then can I think of other things to do,—
Of writing poems like this, or making plans

Whereby dishwashing may be rendered,—say,
"Do you wash dishes EVERY day, my dear,
Dear wife or mother, neighbor, friend? Then cheer!
I'm feeling queer! Come, let's run out and play."

(If poets dared to preach whene'er they write,
I'd add another line or two to this
And say some things I think;—how to dismiss
All drudgery,—but I'm not ready quite!)

THE POSTMAN'S DREAM

The postman plods with nimble feet astride his one-wheeled bike; he never hurries but always hastes while halting on his hike. His sober face is wreathed in smiles, his empty bag is full; the whiskers on his beardless face are black as snow-white wool. He gaily glooms: "I'm all sold out;" and yet he's 'most all in; he always speaks nor says a word, he is so fat he's thin. When lifting high his lowly foot, its heels his ear drums beat; upon the front side-walk he runs while swimming in the street. And when his load he's left, he's right; he cuts ice making hay; should he get down to hustle up, he'll finish tonight today. But a storm is raging, all is calm, the wind in silence roars; and from the sunny, moonlit sky, the snow in trickles pours. The lightning rumbles, thunders flash, and things are many few; dark brightness of the daytime night sounds warnings falsely true. The postman frowns with many a smile, and slowly flies for home; before he reaches there, his wife exclaims: "When did you come?" "I have not been away," groaned he, and gave a noiseless scream; "Do let me get awake and sleep, and have a pleasant dream."

"THE FIX THE POETS ARE IN"

(Reply to an Editorial)

YOU say "the poets are in a fix!"
Perhaps, yet the versifier's tricks
Enable a rhymester to make SOME bricks
Without straw.
"An engine's perfection puts test severe
On the modern poet." Yet, never fear,
He will measure up soon, my editor dear,
Without flaw.

As long as we rhymesters have words such as raucus
And rattletrap, sure no machine shall out-talk us!
Nor can all the engines in Christendom balk us.

You say "it is hard to wax very poetic,
For a bard to go jingling and yet be esthetic,
In an age so mechanical, so arithmetic,"—
Perish the thought!
Depriving the poet of "valuable matter
And verse-forms" while there is such plentiful clatter,
Rhythm-fraught!

There's pish, tush and twaddle with claptrap and clamor,
There's twang, peck and rattlebox, yap, yowl and hammer;
There's yell, pop and jingo,
Long lantern-jawed lingo,
There's jangle and gabble with jargon and jammer.

There's plum, snap and snicker, zip, haw, gee and whizz,
There's bang, whack and wallop, scat, sizzle and hiss;
There's bum and bamboozle,
There's fidfad and foozle,
There's chug chug tomfoolery and bunkum like this.

Give us piffle and wiggle,
Puff, wig-wag and sputter,
We will sneeze, creak and giggle
With spurt, snort and stutter,
And will match all the music of the modern machines;
But for now this suffices,—we have spilled enough beans.

THE OLD COUNTRY SCHOOL

WITH the passing of September and the opening days of school,
Hosts of memories of my childhood other thoughts nigh overrule;
I can see the old red schoolhouse at the crossroads corner there,—
Number Seven, Rockcreek Township, in old Indiana fair;
In Wells County, near the Wabash, river well and widely known,
Where the boys fished, swam and skated. Still I hear the river's tone
As it called us in all seasons from our work to come and play;
Ever thru my thoughts that river flows its smooth, meandering way.

I can hear the lusty summons to the scholars large and small,
Of the bell's commanding clangor in the early morning call.
Enter now the simple doorway; "Do what YOU know to be right"
Was the motto in blue letters, hung upon a wall of white.
Slowly dragged the tedious morning, time for recess came at last;
"Town-ball," "Crack the Whip," and "Black Man,"—playtime all too soon was past.
Then came noon and time for dinner; Oh, the appetites we had!
Memories of this single feature move to tears this grown-up lad.

See the little round tin bucket with its slender, shining bail;
And the contents, who can tell them! Tongue and pen forever fail.
I can smell and taste the lunches that dear mother put up then;

Oh, to find food appetizing, and just half so good again!
Home-made bread and apple butter, spare ribs, doughnuts, fruit and pie,
Hard-boiled eggs, smoked sausage, chicken, Ah, but that was living high!
Pardon here a pause, dear reader, while I fix this leaky eye;
For I cannot see the picture, somehow something's gone awry.)
Well, one lad, a wordy youngster, oft this problem would propound,
Thinking by his clever nonsense all his schoolmates to astound:

> "If two diametrical circles with octagonal peripheries should collide on a centrifugal idiosyncrasy, what would the catastrophe exert on a crystallized codfish suspended by the tail from a homogeneous rafter of the imperium?"

This and other vital questions of our childhood still remain,
And unanswered shall be with us till more wisdom we attain.

Soon our schooldays will be over; "School's out!" Hear the chorus ring!
Then we children will be happy, as we were in early Spring.
Time was when the country teacher went with us to stay all night;
Now the program will be different, for the Master will invite
All the girls and boys to His house, He this time will be the Host;
We shall still be studying, learning, doing what we love the most.
We shall play and work unwearied, never conscious of a rule,
And I think we may in fancy, journey back to the Country School.

FINAL WISHES

MAY you never lose your relish
For hilarity and fun;
May you never quit your fooling
Till your life's last day is done.

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Soon our schooldays will be over; "School's out!" Hear the chorus ring!
Then we children will be happy, as we were in early Spring.
Time was when the country teacher went with us to stay all night;
Now the program will be different, for the Master will invite
All the girls and boys to His house, He this time will be the Host;
We shall still be studying, learning, doing what we love the most.
We shall play and work unwearied, never conscious of a rule,
And I think we may in fancy, journey back to the Country School.

FINAL WISHES

MAY you never lose your relish
For hilarity and fun;
May you never quit your fooling
Till your life's last day is done.

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